

### **Technical Proposal Instructions to Offerors**

Offerors shall describe their proposed five-year technical plan. The plan for the first year of the contract requires greater detail than the plan for the subsequent four years. This approach allows the U.S. Department of Education (“ED” or “the Department”) to assess the ability of the offerors to carry out the work over the performance period but reflects an understanding that some aspects of the work will change over time within the appropriation authorized by the statute.

Offerors shall cover Tasks 1-7 in the technical proposal. Offerors shall ensure that, in preparing their technical proposal, they plan to allocate not less than 25 percent of their budget for Tasks 1-5 to rural areas, including schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, as specified by statute.

Offerors shall indicate how they propose to carry out the work of the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL), and shall not merely repeat the language of the Performance Work Statement (PWS). To encourage offerors to use their expertise and creativity, the PWS describes the purpose and identifies the tasks for the contract, but offerors shall provide specific details about **how they propose to accomplish the purpose and tasks. The PWS identifies some issues, but** offerors shall raise additional issues as appropriate and shall provide specific details about how they propose to handle the issues.

Technical proposals should be no more than 120 pages long, excluding appendices, double-sided, double-spaced with a 12-point font size and margins of at least 1 inch in a binder. The following appendices shall be included:

1. ***Schedule of Deliverables/Milestones by Task***
2. ***Staffing and Management Plan***, including relevant detailed charts and tables, should be no more than 10 pages, double-sided, double spaces.
3. ***Resumes***: One appendix shall include the resumes of key project staff. Resumes should include each person’s professional background, including degrees held and specializations, along with relevant professional experience. The resumes of proposed staff should be no longer than three (3) pages each.
4. ***Relevant corporate experience***: A second appendix shall include a brief (one paragraph) description of each relevant project and activity that the offeror considers key documentation for corporate experience. These should be consistent with, but may include more than, the projects/activities used to justify the offeror’s experience by task.
5. ***Responsibility of Prospective Contractor***: E. 1-8 descriptions and statements listed under Clause L.10.
6. ***Other appendices as specified by task***. As evidence of their experience in or capacity to conduct similar work, the offeror is encouraged to provide exemplars that are relevant to the requirements of certain tasks.

### **Organization of the Technical Proposal**

After providing some preliminary background information, offerors are encouraged to organize their proposal according to the tasks and subtasks described in the PWS, while still ensuring that connections between tasks are made when appropriate. In the Technical Proposal, offerors shall demonstrate a thorough understanding of the goals and activities of the PWS. The technical proposal must describe the offeror's plans to accomplish each activity and the relevant deliverables. The plan shall include fully developed actions to accomplish the tasks and subtasks.

For each task in the PWS, the offerors shall provide the following information:

- A broad description of the work – strategies, operations, procedures, and activities – that they propose to achieve task objectives over the five-year contract period, including a schedule of deliverables.
- Specific detail about the strategies, operations, procedures, activities and deliverables proposed for Year 1.
- A justification for why these strategies are the best option for the region.
- A description of work that the offeror has conducted in the past that demonstrates that the offeror has the experience to carry out the task as described.
- *A list of ~~up to five (5)~~ key personnel that will work on the task, their expected roles, and a description of the experience and expertise that the offeror believes qualifies these proposed staff to implement the task successfully.* (Resumes should be provided in an appendix; this section should include no more than one paragraph for each key person that points towards the most relevant experience and qualifications that are applicable to the particular task).
- A staff loading chart that lists key personnel and percent FTE by Task for each contract year.
- Additional instructions (if applicable, as specified below for certain tasks).

ED encourages offerors to use the categories above -- overall work plan, Year 1 work plan, justification for approach and focus, corporate experience, staff qualifications, staff loading chart, and additional instructions (as needed)– to structure their technical proposal discussion of each Task.

### **Cover Sheet**

A cover sheet should be provided with the name and address of the firm, as well as the signature of an officer of the firm.

### **Table of Contents**

The table of contents shall include the identification of the key authors of each section, by name and proposed role in the project.

#### Task 1: Needs Assessment:

The offeror shall describe its understanding of the overall education needs of the region and how it came to those judgments.

Among the identified regional needs, the offeror shall identify three to five specific education topics that, upon award, will be the major focus for the offeror's research alliances, analytic technical support, research and evaluation studies, and dissemination efforts during the contract period. Offerors are encouraged to select topics that are of broad national interest but are specific enough that a substantial measurable contribution can be made to the region. The offeror shall provide a sound justification for why the particular topics were chosen and a short synopsis of how the proposed work under the remaining tasks creates a cohesive set of activities and body of evidence in these topic areas. Through its description of the experiences and expertise of key personnel proposed to work on each task, the contractor shall demonstrate that its team includes staff with appropriate qualifications to carry out the work in these topic areas.

#### Task 2: Maintenance and Refinement of Research Alliances

The offeror shall describe in general terms the set of research alliances (their topic area, objectives, composition, and work agenda) that are expected to be implemented over the five-year contract period.

In providing detail for Year 1, the offeror shall describe with specificity the research alliances that will be implemented/initiated in the first year of the contract. For each research alliance, offerors shall include the focus of the research alliance (the topic area and education problem or concern that will be addressed); the goals and objectives of the research alliance work; how the offeror will measure achievement of the goals; the number, roles, and geographic location of research alliance participants that will be targeted for participation; and a brief summary of the proposed activities of the research alliance, including analytic support activities (with more detail provided under Task 3), research/evaluation studies (with more detail provided under Task 4), and specific dissemination activities.

In a supporting appendix, the offeror shall provide the following information for each of the proposed Year 1 research alliances:

- a. Letters of interest from at least 1 and up to 35 potential research alliance participants/stakeholders for each research alliance, indicating their understanding of the research alliance goals and the nature of participation expected (such as participation in randomized trials or other studies).
- b. Any special considerations anticipated in soliciting and maintaining research alliance membership (including proposed activities to maximize input and engagement of research alliance participants on an on-going basis)
- c. A detailed agenda for the proposed first formal meeting of the research alliance

- d. Proposed calendar of events for the first 12 months of the contract
- e. Other considerations specifically related to this research alliance concern or the area in which it will be addressed

#### Task 3: Analytic Technical Support

In addition to providing the five-year and Year 1 plans, justification, corporate experience, and staff qualifications that pertain to this task, the contractor shall provide in a supporting appendix of exemplars of its prior or current work providing analytic technical support. The contractor shall provide the following:

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1. A short (up to 15 double spaced pages or 8 single spaced pages) analytic technical assistance document or part of a document that the offeror has used within the last 3 years. The document may not have been revised to reflect any comments from Institute of Education Sciences (IES) or its designees under the REL program. If a document does not exist, the offeror shall provide a sample of a product it would produce if awarded the contract. Each exemplar shall include the following written assurance on its cover sheet: "This document does not reflect any comments from IES or its designees under the REL program."
2. An agenda of an event that was designed to provide analytical technical assistance to education stakeholders that occurred within the last three years. The agenda may not have been revised to reflect any comments from IES or its designees under the REL program. If an actual agenda does not exist, then the offeror shall provide a sample of an agenda that it would propose if awarded the contract. Each exemplar shall include the following written assurance on its cover sheet: "This document does not reflect any comments from IES or its designees under the REL program."

#### Task 4: Applied Research and Evaluation Studies

In addition to providing the five-year and Year 1 plans, justification, corporate experience, and staff qualifications that pertain to this Task, in a supporting appendix the contractor shall provide exemplars of its prior or current work designing and conducting research and evaluation studies.

3. The contractor shall provide two (2) research/evaluation papers or reports (or parts of papers or reports) that reflect the diversity of analytic studies that the contractor has conducted within the last three (3) years. The papers or reports provided should demonstrate the contractor's commitment to quality, rigor, relevance, and usefulness to practitioners. Each paper or report shall not exceed 8 single spaced pages or 15 double spaced pages (table of contents, title page, and other introductory pages excluded). If the original document exceeds 15 pages, the offeror shall provide an excerpt that includes relevance, methodology and analysis. The documents may not have been revised to reflect any comments from IES or its designees under the REL program. The offeror may choose to develop a product for this proposal if one does not exist. Each exemplar shall include the following written assurance on its cover

sheet: "This document does not reflect any comments from IES or its designees under the REL program."

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#### Task 5: Dissemination

4. In addition to providing the five-year and Year 1 plans, justification, corporate experience, and staff qualifications that pertain to this Task, in a supporting appendix the contractor shall provide exemplars of its prior or current work disseminating research and evaluation findings to stakeholders. The contractor shall provide an agenda for and summary of two events that were designed to disseminate to and engage practitioners with research or evaluation findings that were held during the past 3 years. *The documents may not have been revised to reflect any comments from IES or its designees under the REL program.* If the offeror has not conducted such activities, the offeror shall provide an agenda for two events that it would propose to conduct if awarded the contract. Each event summary, including agenda, should be no longer than 5 pages. *Each exemplar shall include the following written assurance on its cover sheet: "This document does not reflect comments from IES or its designees under the REL program."*

#### Task 6: Collaboration and Coordination

No additional instructions.

#### Task 7: Management and Reporting

No additional instructions.

#### Staffing and Management Plan

Although the offeror will have already described the relevant qualifications of key staff (prime contractor and any subcontractors or consultants) proposed to implement each task of the PWS, in this section the offeror shall describe the staffing and management plan. Offerors shall explain clearly how they propose to manage and coordinate contract operations and personnel working on the contract, including any subcontractors and consultants. Offerors shall describe how they propose to ensure the completion of the work of the contract on time, within budget, and to ED standards of acceptable quality. Please refer to Attachment B, Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan (QASP). Offerors shall describe functional responsibilities, lines of communication and authority for project management, including any sub-contractual arrangements. Offerors shall describe clearly their internal quality control plan that addresses accountability in each task area.

In addition to addressing these issues, the offeror shall provide the following:

1. A chart summarizing the roles, lines of authority and responsibility, and reporting structures of key personnel for each task.
2. A table indicating the number of proposed hours of each key staff person by task/subtask and their availability to conduct the proposed work. Offerors shall include the proportion of each key staff person's time that is committed to other projects (including but not limited to federal and non-federal obligations and outside consulting assignments). In addition, one or more columns shall include the proportion of each person's time included in proposals for other work that includes the period 2012-2017.

The contractor will determine all the labor categories and staffing levels appropriate for completing the goals of the project. All contractor staff shall be United States citizens or legal permanent residents.

#### **Proposal Instructions for Optional Task 8: Coordinating Entity**

An offeror interested in submitting a proposal for task 8 shall submit a separate stand-alone proposal for Task 8. ED panels first will review the proposals for Tasks 1-7 in each of the 10 regions. After ED selects the contractors for the 10 regional contracts, a panel will review any Task 8 proposals submitted by the 10 contractors selected. Task 8 will be awarded to one of the 10 regional contracts.

In the Optional Task 8 proposals, offerors shall describe their proposed five-year technical plan, providing specific detail for the first of five years. As with the other tasks, this approach allows the Department to assess the ability of the offeror to carry out the work over the contract period but reflects an understanding that some aspects of the work will change over time. The successful offeror will have an opportunity to update the work plan each year.

Offerors shall follow General Instructions for proposal submission, including separate technical and business proposals for the project. Technical proposals for Optional Task 8 shall be no more than 25 pages excluding small business plan and appendices, double-sided, double spaced with a 12-point font size, and margins of at least 1 inch.

The proposal for Optional Task 8 shall include a cover sheet, table of contents, a one page executive summary, technical plan, information on personnel, management plan, and small business plan.

#### **Cover Sheet**

A cover sheet with the name and address of the firm, as well as the signature of an officer of the firm shall be provided.

#### **Table of Contents**

The table of contents shall include the identification of the key authors of each section, by name and proposed role in the project.

#### Technical Plan

The offeror shall provide the following information in the technical plan:

- A broad description of the proposed work, including strategies, operations, procedures, and activities, that will achieve the task's objectives over the five-year contract period, including a schedule of deliverables.
- Specific detail about the strategies, operations, procedures, activities and deliverables proposed for Year 1.
- A justification for why the strategies that the offeror is proposing will be an efficient and useful way to coordinate cross-REL information sharing.
- A detailed description of an intranet design that is user friendly and effective at promoting cross-REL sharing of documents and ideas.
- A description of work that the offeror has conducted in the past that demonstrates that the offeror has the experience to carry out the task as described.
- *A list of up to 5 key personnel who will work on the task, their expected roles, and a description of the experience and expertise that the offeror believes qualifies these proposed staff to successfully implement the task.* This section should include no more than one paragraph for each key person and should highlight the most relevant experience and qualifications applicable to the particular task; resumes should be provided in appendix.

The following appendices shall be included:

1. ***Schedule of Deliverables/Milestones by Task***
2. ***Staffing and Management Plan***, including relevant detailed charts and tables, should be no more than 10 pages, double-sided, double spaces.
3. ***Resumes***: One appendix shall include the resumes of key project staff. Resumes should include each person's professional background, including degrees held and specializations, along with relevant professional experience. The resumes of proposed staff should be no longer than three (3) pages each.
4. ***Relevant corporate experience***: A second appendix shall include a brief (one paragraph) description of each relevant project and activity that the offeror considers key documentation for corporate experience. These should be consistent with, but may include more than, the projects/activities used to justify the offeror's experience by task.

**5. *Responsibility of Prospective Contractor:*** E. 1-8 descriptions and statements listed under Clause L.10.

6. ***Other appendices as specified by task.*** As evidence of their experience in or capacity to conduct similar work, the offeror is encouraged to provide exemplars that are relevant to the requirements of certain tasks.

Staffing and Management Plan

Offerors shall demonstrate how they propose to manage and coordinate contract operations and personnel working on the tasks, including any subcontractors and consultants, and among the staff working on Tasks 1-7. Offerors shall describe how they propose to ensure the completion of the work of the tasks on time, within budget, and to ED standards of acceptable quality. Offerors shall describe functional responsibilities, lines of communication and authority for project management, including any subcontractor arrangements. Offerors shall discuss their internal quality control plan that addresses accountability in each Task area.

In addition to text addressing these issues, the offeror shall provide the following:

1. A chart summarizing the roles, lines of authority and responsibility, and reporting structures of key personnel for Task 8 with the leadership of Tasks 1-7.
2. A table indicating the number of proposed hours of each key staff person within this task.
3. A table indicating the availability of key staff to conduct the proposed work. Offerors shall include the proportion of each staff person's time that is committed to other projects (including but not limited to federal and non-federal obligations and outside consulting assignments). In addition, one or more columns shall include the proportion of each person's time included in proposals for other work that includes the period 2012-2017.

The contractor will determine the labor categories and staffing levels appropriate for completing the goals of the project. All contractor staff shall be United States citizens or legal permanent residents.